

Illinois LDC Customer Service and Outreach

Illinois Commerce Commission 2015-2016 Winter Preparedness Policy Session

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Key Communication Themes

Financial Assistance

Programs and support for low-income customers

Customer Experience

Options for customers to obtain information, manage billing and payment options

Safety

Winter safety advice, recommendations and support

Energy Efficiency

Comprehensive programs available

Financial Assistance


- 2016 federal LIHEAP funding for Illinois: \$149 million
- Illinois ranks fourth in federal funding levels
- LIHEAP advocacy
 - March 2, 2016, LIHEAP action day
 - August LIHEAP action month
- Approximately 300,000 Illinois LIHEAP recipients



Financial Assistance

- **MidAmerican Energy: I Care**
- **Nicor Gas: Sharing Program**
- **Peoples Gas/North Shore Gas: Share the Warmth**
- **Ameren Illinois: Warm Neighbors Cool Friends**



WARM NEIGHBORS  COOL FRIENDS

Financial Assistance Outreach

Priority is educating customers about financial assistance options.

- Printed information
- Utility resource fairs
- Winter weatherization programs
- Elected official events
- Partner outreach
- PIPP customer support



Customer Experience

Multiple channels

- Web
- Customer service center
- IVR
- Outbound calling
- Emails/texts



Multiple options

- Electronic billing and payments
- Budget billing
- Payment plans
- Company specific options
- The Illinois Patriot Plan



Safety

- Fire prevention
- CO safety
- Safe removal of ice and snow build-up
- Billing scams
- Contractor off-season education



ENERGIZING OUR COMMUNITY

Tips & Tools from Nicor Gas

STAY SAFE AND WARM THIS WINTER

This winter, we want to help ensure that you continue to receive safe and reliable natural gas service with these tips to help avoid potential service interruptions. While natural gas meters are designed to withstand winter weather, you can help by:

- Removing ice and snow from your natural gas meter with your hands or a broom. Never use any mechanized equipment or hard object to remove snow and ice.
- Keeping natural gas vents unobstructed and free of debris. Some direct-vent and high-efficiency appliances have direct side wall outdoor vents and air intakes that could become obstructed during heavy snowfalls.

Just as you take your vehicle in for regular tune-ups, your natural gas appliances will also benefit from regular up-keep, including:

- Cleaning out the lint drawer and vents of your dryer
- Regularly servicing your oven and stove
- Knowing the age of your water heater and furnace and visiting NicorGasRebate.com to see the rebates available for upgrading to energy-efficient appliances.
- Performing a clean and check on your furnace to minimize the chance of breakdowns — saving energy and extending the life of your heating system while also helping to ensure your comfort all winter.

WARM HEARTS, WARM HOMES

Do you know someone having trouble paying their energy bills? Help is available! The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides financial assistance for winter heating service through grants that do not need to be repaid. To learn more, contact 877.411.9278 (WARM).

Customers may also be eligible for the Nicor Gas Sharing Program, which provides one-time annual grants to qualified customers who need assistance with paying their natural gas bill. To apply for the Nicor Gas Sharing Program, contact 773.203.3568.

Please consider helping those in need this winter season by making a contribution to the Nicor Gas Sharing Program. Simply check the appropriate box on your bill stub and add the amount to your payment. If your natural gas bill is electronically transferred, pledge a contribution by calling 888.Nicor4U (888.642.6748). Grants are matched dollar for dollar, up to \$175,000 annually by Nicor Gas.

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165 YEARS

It's Worth The Energy?

Contact Us Log in

Your Account

English Español

Username:

Password:

Forgot Username or Password? New User? Register

Login

1 2 3

LIHEAP Open To Seniors And People With Disabilities. Share the Warmth Grants Also Available.

Ameren Alerts!

Wouldn't it be nice to be one step ahead of your energy account? Sign up for Ameren Alerts today. [\(more\)](#)

Nicor Gas "Winter Preparedness" segment on NBC 5 11/2/14

- CLEAR METER FROM SNOW & ICE
- USE BROOM TO CLEAR
- CHECK OUTDOOR VENTS
- WORKING CO DETECTOR
- DAMAGED LINE, LEAVE AND CALL 911

1:16 / 3:47

Powered by midstate (M) January 7 - 48

It's freezing outside! If your meter becomes encased in ice, do not try to melt or chip the ice. Instead, call us at 888-427-5632 for service. <http://www.ky3DWPTV>

Winter Programs

- All natural gas utilities issue press releases / answer media inquiries about upcoming heating season, natural gas costs and natural gas safety.
- All companies use multiple communication channels to inform consumers how to apply for financial assistance.
- In October, Ameren Illinois provided about 1,000 income-qualified customers in Peoria and East St. Louis utility bill assistance and grants totaling \$100,000. In 2015, Ameren Illinois has donated a total of \$1million to military families, seniors, low-income customers, and social service organizations to assist with energy costs.
- Nicor Gas reached more than 16,000 customers through 32 community events to educate them on ways to control costs before heating season. Nearly 1,500 free energy-saving kits were distributed through the energy efficiency program at start of heating season to help customers control energy use before winter.
- Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas employee volunteers weatherized seniors homes in Chicago and Waukegan with partners Housing Opportunities and Maintenance for the Elderly (H.O.M.E) and ElderCARE.
- MidAmerican Energy produced and released the HomeCheck Program video in early-October via YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, and in its monthly residential e-newsletter. Video will remain on YouTube and promoted throughout winter in customer newsletters and social media.
- Ameren Illinois will help all customers prepare for winter by hosting various events from Nov. 30 – Dec. 4 “Warm Winter Week,” to educate seniors and low-income customers on winter heating costs and reducing winter heating bills.

Winter Programs

- All companies will communicate about winter storms safety and preparation through multiple channels.
- North Shore Gas and Nicor Gas are partnering with Community Action Partnership of Lake County on Dec. 5 to provide financial assistance, billing support and energy efficiency advice in Waukegan.
- Peoples Gas, Congressman Danny Davis, the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA) and Com Ed are partnering at utility resource fair to provide financial assistance, billing support and energy efficiency advice Dec. 5 at Mark T. Skinner Classical School.
- MidAmerican Energy employees conduct soup/food fundraisers where all the monies collected are donated to I CARE. Employees also can purchase a sticker anytime that allows casual day dress – all monies are given to I CARE.
- Ameren Illinois will reach out to more than 12,000 teachers through KidsActOnEnergy program with information about electric and gas safety. Teachers have the opportunity to order materials and access lesson plans and quizzes about using energy safely. More than 50,000 elementary age students receive these materials each year.
- Nicor, Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas are distributing over 14,000 Super Saver kits to nearly 500 classrooms across northern Illinois. The kits teach students simple ways to use energy and water more efficiently at home. The program, targeted to fifth-grade science teachers, comes with teacher education materials, lesson plans and activity books.
- Financial assistance resource fairs will be held throughout Illinois from January 2016 through March 2016.

Winter Programs

- All companies warn customers about known and emerging utility billing/payment scams using traditional and social media channels.
- Ameren Illinois begins its annual excavator prevention-based safety campaign in an effort to promote safe work practices around natural gas and electric facilities. More than 18,000 contractors will receive Worker Beware Digging and Excavating brochures and other resources. Objectives are to save lives, reduce injuries, reduce dig-ins and associated claims.
- Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas sponsor annual excavators' breakfast and launches DIGGER and JULIE awareness ahead of construction season.
- Nicor Gas partners with American Red Cross to take its natural gas safety program to fire stations in 53 communities across its service area during National Fire Prevention Week.
- Peoples Gas works with the City of Chicago to prepare citizens ahead of winter by participating in workshops, press conferences and awareness campaigns with city officials. Radio advertising also planned to remind customers to install and check CO detector batteries.
- NSG distributes free CO detectors at community outreach event with Waukegan Fire Department.
- MidAmerican Energy issues press releases to remind customers that winter poses increased risk of CO poisoning and to inform customers on how to prevent CO poisoning and the signs of exposure.